UNITED
NATIONS

CCPR

International covenant
on civil and
political rights

Distr.
GENERAL

CCPR/C/SR.1699/Add.1
5 August 1998

Original: ENGLISH

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Sixty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND PART (PUBLIC)* OF THE 1699th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 31 July 1998 at 12.35 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. CHANET

CONTENTS

ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS (continued)

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

* The summary record of the first part (closed) of the meeting appears as document CCPR/C/SR.1699.

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.98-17420 (E)

The public part of the meeting was called to order at 12.35 p.m.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS (agenda item 2) (continued)

Letter from the United Nations Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women to the Chairperson of the Committee

1. The CHAIRPERSON drew attention to a letter she had received from the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women proposing that a joint statement be made by the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the indivisibility of human rights and the centrality of gender awareness.

2. Ms. EVATT said it would be inappropriate for the Committee to make the kind of statement proposed in the last three paragraphs of the draft statement, which appeared to be focused on the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The initiative aimed at encouraging positive action by the treaty bodies to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should, however, be supported.

3. The Committee might perhaps, in its preliminary response, draw attention to its work within the reporting process, under the Optional Protocol and through its general comments, which contributed to the implementation of equality in the enjoyment of rights. Further attention would, no doubt, be paid to the proposed draft statement at the next meeting of the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies, and she had prepared a brief preliminary response for the Committee's consideration.

4. Mr. POCAR said he would be prepared to respond positively to the initiative, but substantial amendments would have to be made to the draft joint statement. He wondered why only three treaty bodies were to be involved and why, for instance, the Committee on the Rights of the Child had been omitted. That was a point that might be raised at the meeting of chairpersons. The penultimate paragraph should be deleted since it was inappropriate to specify the tasks of the various treaty bodies or to lay down guidelines for their work.

5. Mr. KRETZMER said that the Committee's competence with respect to the draft joint statement should be discussed.

6. The CHAIRPERSON suggested that members should examine the draft joint statement and Ms. Evatt's response and compare their views at the forthcoming sixty-fourth session.

7. It was so decided.

Funds for the publication of the Official Records of the Human Rights Committee

8. Mr. ANDO said that, thanks to a very generous donation by the Sasakawa Foundation of Japan, the publication backlog in respect of the Official Records of the Human Rights Committee had been considerably reduced. Funds were running out, however, and some alternative source of financing must be sought for that very important publication.

9. Mr. de ZAYAS (Secretary of the Committee) said that slightly more than US$ 9,000 remained in the fund. The matter could be brought to the attention of the Publications Board by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, if the Committee so requested. The Board would then endeavour to obtain donations from other sources.

10. Lord COLVILLE proposed that the Committee should act on that suggestion.

11. It was so decided.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

Meeting with the High Commissioner for Human Rights

12. Mrs. ROBINSON (High Commissioner for Human Rights) said she was pleased to have a second opportunity to meet the members of the Committee. She had taken due note of the points they had made during the private meeting at the beginning of the session and was aware of the serious work that the Committee had since accomplished. It had been a very difficult and important session, underscoring the central role that the Committee played in the area of human rights. Through its in-depth examination of difficult issues, it had played a prominent part in developing the structure that had evolved since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 50 years previously. She reaffirmed her commitment to doing her utmost, together with her colleagues, to ensure that the Committee was able to discharge its responsibilities under t e best possible conditions.

13. Mr. LALLAH said that all the members of the Committee appreciated the High Commissioner's commitment to their work.

14. Mr. PRADO VALLEJO said that the Committee warmly appreciated the interest that the High Commissioner had shown in its work and her commitment to addressing the problems that existed in order to enhance the Committee's efficiency and thus promote the enjoyment of civil and political rights.

15. Mr. KLEIN said that the Committee's first meeting with the High Commissioner had taken place under difficult circumstances but the session had nonetheless produced sound results, thanks to her interest and commitment, the hard work of the members and the valuable support of the Secretariat.

16. Mr. SCHEININ said that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government representatives had been following the proceedings of the current

session and members had received some positive comments on the way in which the Committee was discharging its mandate. A great deal of credit therefor was due to the Secretary of the Committee and his team.

17. The problems were not over, however, in particular, the Committee had been unable to deal with a sufficient number of individual communications during the session. The quality of the decisions and the principles underlying them could well be jeopardized if the situation did not improve.

18. Ms. EVATT said that, at the earlier meeting with the High Commissioner, she had drawn attention to the many shortcomings and omissions in the preparations for the session. As the session drew to its close, however, she wished to stress that the small group of staff members assigned to the Committee had done their level best to ensure that the proceedings ran smoothly. Unfortunately, the fact that they were so few in number and most of them without any long experience of working with the Committee had placed an extra burden on all concerned.

19. Mr. BUERGENTHAL said that he welcomed the High Commissioner's manifest commitment to the Committee's work, since he had begun to worry that its unglamorous nature might be conducive to neglect. It had not been an easy session but he was confident that matters would improve and that the Committee's future proceedings would be more productive.

20. Mr. ANDO said that he was well aware that the High Commissioner had been confronted with many difficulties on taking office, especially in connection with the restructuring process that had begun before her arrival. The Committee's work could, he firmly believed, make a difference to the daily lives of ordinary people. With the forthcoming accession of China, the Covenant would cover almost the entire population of the world. Under those circumstances, the Committee was very grateful for the High Commissioner's firm commitment and assistance.

21. Mr. BHAGWATI said that the Committee had initially harboured serious misgivings about its ability to deal adequately with its agenda but it was reasonably satisfied with its performance, largely thanks to the unstinting cooperation it had received from the Secretariat.

22. Mr. POCAR said that, despite the difficulties encountered, the goals of the session had ultimately been achieved. How long the Committee would be able to keep up the effort required without receiving sufficient support, was a tricky question, however. The High Commissioner's commitment was thus extremely welcome.

23. The CHAIRPERSON said that the members of the Committee and the Secretariat had pushed themselves to the limit and eventually achieved the goals that had been set. The proceedings had not, perhaps, made front-page headlines but they had commanded serious attention from NGOs, Member States and the press.

24. After the customary exchange of courtesies, she declared the sixty-third session closed.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.